



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

July 24, 2008

Hon. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Chair
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
U.S. House of Representatives
Room HT2
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Tubbs Jones:

I am writing to ask the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct ("the Committee") to review unfounded allegations made against me with respect to apartment units that I have rented in my congressional district in Harlem, New York at #40 West 135th Street ("Lenox Terrace"). There is no basis for any such allegations.

Some in the press have repeatedly--and erroneously--insinuated wrongdoing in my dealings with the landlord at Lenox Terrace. There has been no wrongdoing.

Further, I am in compliance with House Ethics rules regarding my rentals at Lenox Terrace. In each of the apartments I have rented, I have paid the maximum legal rent, and have never benefited from any so-called "gift" from the landlord.

I will briefly summarize what I believe are undisputed facts as to each issue. My attorney will follow-up at your request with greater detail and verification of these facts.

1. 16th Floor Adjacent Units Serving as My Primary Residence

The first issue involves two adjacent apartment units on the 16th floor of Lenox Terrace that have been and still are being used as my, and my wife's, primary residence, one for 20 years, and the other for ten years. I am attaching an article that appeared in the *New York Times* on July 20, 2008. Attachment A. That article states, and many other real estate law experts confirm, that it is both legal and not unusual for a resident to occupy more than one unit in an apartment building covered by New York State's rent stabilization program as long as these units are being used as the occupant's primary residence. The latter was certainly true in my case and there has been no dispute about that in the media or anywhere else.

I signed the lease for the first unit in November 1988--approximately 20 years ago--occupying a unit that the prior occupant, a prominent minister in Harlem, had combined by removing the wall of two adjacent units to make one apartment. The lease confirms the landlord's view that it was deemed to be as one unit, since there is a *single lease*, not two separate leases, and the single lease designates the units as "16 N-P." Attachment B.

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The second unit, 16M, is a small studio apartment immediately adjacent to 16 N-P. Attachment C. When 16M became vacant about 10 years ago, I immediately took the opportunity to rent the unit for my use as a study and library. It also serves as a place for use by visiting family and friends who can stay over using a bed which folds out of a closet, commonly known as a "Murphy bed."

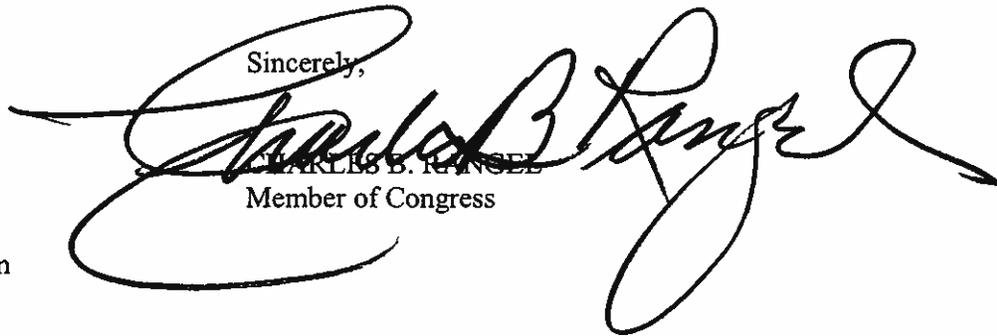
2. In the case of both units 16 N-P and 16 M, I have always paid the maximum lawful rent to the landlord.

3. The second issue involves an apartment unit that I leased, Apartment 10U, going back to November 1996 to the present. Attachment D. As required under the New York State rent stabilization program, I paid the maximum lawful rent for the apartment which had been used as a campaign office. The landlord always had the right to petition the State for a higher rent or to ask me to leave the unit under the existing rent stabilization law. The landlord chose not to do so.

I have informed the landlord that I am now making arrangements to vacate this unit in the near future and am seeking a larger space elsewhere. On July 22, 2008, I requested a review by the Federal Election Commission regarding the rental of this apartment. Attachment E.

In conclusion, I respectfully request the Committee review the allegation that I've received a "gift" from the landlord, that "gift" being the difference between the maximum lawful rent, which I have paid and continue to pay in all instances at Lenox Terrace, and a so called "market rate" rent which does not exist in theory or in fact.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles B. Ransel". The signature is written over the typed name and title.

CHARLES B. RANSEL
Member of Congress

CBR/em